



Election Modernization Committee

Date: May 25, 2021.

Time: 7:30 pm.

Location: Virtually via Zoom.

Minutes

Attendance: Greg Dennis, Juli Brazile, Juhan Sonin, Paul Parravano, Giovanna DeStefanis, Lesley Waxman, Lenard Diggins, Jennifer Susse, Maxwell Palmer, Adam Badik, Walter Horn.

1. Executive Order on Remote Participation

Greg read the Governor's Order on Remote Participation.

2. Draft Minutes for Review, Edits, and Approval - Tue, March 30, 2021

Lesley moved approval. Juli second. Approved unanimously.

3. Update on Town Meeting

Greg reported the strong support for the Ranked Choice Vote article and the defeat of the Schlichtman amendment.

4. Update on Annual Town Election - Sat, April 10

Juli updated the committee on the number of mailed ballots. The Legislature has been holding hearings on expanding vote by mail, but no details are available.

5. Status of AutoMARK terminals

Paul described the issues he had with the special machine that assists the visually impaired. The state has to replace them on their end.

Lesley proposed writing a letter urging the SOC to address the issue and the motion was approved. Paul asked about the November option the SOC offered for the visually impaired option. There was no clarity how local election officials should implement this for local elections.

Paul, Adam and Juli will work on drafting the letter. Paul proposed reaching out to the Arlington Commission on Disabilities and other communities.

6. Census, Reprecincting, and Polling Locations

Juli informed the committee that she will propose that the Select Board reduce the number of precincts from 21 to 16. Concern raised about parking at Pierce and Chestnut Manor. Would more voters make that problem worse? Concern that reducing the number of Finance Committee members could be unpopular. Maxwell Palmer asked about how much change we can expect even if we stay with 21. Polling locations will be reconsidered: Gibbs, Chestnut Manor. We can't use Park Ave; the Select Board has not discussed using the new AHS; they have historically found the rink to be inconvenient. Len asked if we can use extra machines at busy precincts. Lesley says Cambridge does it: one for in-person voters and one for EV and AV going forward is workable.

Juli proposes some public engagement role for EMC. Jennifer likes EMC to being involved - maybe gathering info on polling locations? Adam likes EMC for public engagement, but worries about taking a stand. Lesley said Cambridge Election Commission solicited input online. We could listen to public comment and feed it to the working group. Len suggests informing the Finance Committee early. It will be important for town meeting members to know they all have to run in any precinct where the lines move; based on early draft even with 21 precincts nearly all precincts will move lines a little so that alone is not a reason for town meeting members to object to reducing the number of precincts. Juli should explain the reasons for her recommendation and emphasize what is not working about the current precincts.

7. Early Voting in Town Elections

Cambridge drafted home rule legislation in 2018 for in person early voting that never went anywhere. Lesley dislikes having voting rules differ town by town. Juli is concerned about the cost. Not that many voters use it for the money. Juhan doesn't want to wait and we should do what's good for Arlington. Len asked whether early voting or mailed voting is more costly and the answer is it depends. Len would like us to push for ballots being directly mailed to voters. Adam wants more ways for people to vote. Juli will identify the costs of election, mailed ballots, and in person EV. Jennifer asked if it's worthwhile to do visioning on ideal election models. Saturday early voting is appealing to many. Lesley notes towns have to staff for full turnout in person and pay to staff early voting. Greg believes Arlington proposing home rule legislation just to make a point is fine. Greg believes counter service at

Clerks' Office is cheaper and might be the more cost effective approach.

8. Other Future Topics for Discussion

Letter to Secretary Galvin re: replacing AutoMark machines
Reprecincting role
Election budget and voting recommendations

Jennifer said the Disability Commission and Council on Aging could plan listening sessions on issues on the theory that the town survey doesn't get us the data we need. Paul agrees and will approach the Council on Aging to discuss.

Juhan would like to know if we can set up a time to try the AutoMark with dummy cards. Paul will be happy to help. Juli will ask the vendor.

Can we hold our town elections in November? Len says Town Bylaws would need to be redone.

Adam asked if the Envision Arlington Survey is available. Juli says maybe. Juhan will think about questions to propose.

Jennifer raised the issue of term limits; long limits such as fifteen years could be studied, but she's not sure that is in scope for our committee. Greg thinks it is in scope. Adam is not in favor of the idea.

9. Public Comment and/or Questions

There was no public comment.

10. New Business

Jennifer mentioned that the Envision Arlington Civic Engagement Group would organize soon.

Next meeting will be June 29, 2021.

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:11 pm.